

Winningest seniors Irving, Henriquez, McGruder look to add to legacy



K-State starters, Shane Southwell, Will Spradling, Rodney McGruder, Angel Rodriguez and Jordan Henriquez take the court on Jan. 22 to face KU. Tonight's game against TCU, which is also Senior Night, will be the last time these five take the court at Bramlage together.



Emily DeShazer | Collegian  
Martavious Irving, one of the team's three seniors, dribbles down the court in the Jan. 22 game against KU in Bramlage Coliseum.

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VOL. 118 NO. 106

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**TIPOFF**

7 p.m. @ Bramlage Coliseum

McGruder, seniors celebrate last game in Bramlage tonight



Emily DeShazer | Collegian  
Senior guard Rodney McGruder dribbles the ball as he pushes a Texas Tech player out of the way on Feb. 25 in Bramlage Coliseum. McGruder had 10 points and seven rebounds in the 75-55 win.



Sean Frye

It was March 19, 2008, the day before the 2008 NCAA tournament was set to tip off. I was a sophomore at Stone Bridge High School in Ashburn, Va., a suburb of Washington, D.C. That day, at the Verizon Center in D.C., eight teams including Baylor, Xavier, Duke and West Virginia held an open practice that was free to the fans. I decided to go as I was anxious for the opportunity to see eight tourney-bound teams in their last day of preparations. As my dad is a K-State grad, and I'd attended the K-State versus Missouri game at Bramlage Coliseum earlier that year, I decided to don my black No. 30 K-State jersey. As I sat at this open practice, a group of men and one woman picked me out of the crowd and told me to come talk to them. They told me that they were Michael Beasley's traveling basketball coaches and that they were interested in why a K-State fan was at the open practice sessions. I told them about my passion for the Wildcats, as well as my passion for sports and, more importantly, sports journalism. As we continued to talk throughout the day, they ended up inviting me to a tournament they were hosting the next month in Chantilly, Va. The team wanted me to take photos and do a recap of the three-day tournament for the organization's website. The next month rolled around, and I began to cover the tournament, focusing most of my attention on the orga-

nization's oldest team. I spent some time with the players and quickly discovered that I got along with one of them in particular; to my surprise, he was committed to K-State. Over the next few months, as I was hired by the team to travel with them over the summer, Rodney McGruder and I began not only rooming together, but also building a friendship that is now in its fifth year. That first summer working with the travel team was McGruder's last, and a year later he was a freshman here at K-State. He and I kept in touch as often as we could, but we both had busy schedules. I remember our longest conversation took place the day after the Wildcats beat then-No. 1 Texas. I focused primarily on how he should have finished a breakaway opportunity with a dunk instead of laying it up, even though he got fouled. The next year, with the help of that travel team, I came to K-State not only as a journalism student, but also as a student-manager for the men's basketball team. I arrived on campus with my father the Thursday before classes started and the first person to come to my room at Haymaker Hall was Rodney. We did some catching up before heading over to Bramlage for a pickup game between the players that I and the other managers often watched. It was there that it really hit me that the next few years could be really exciting, and sure enough they have been. That first year proved to be one of the most exciting times of my life. It had its ups and downs, but overall left me very optimistic about the future. Probably the story that sticks out the most involving Rodney and myself was during a game in Kansas City between K-State and the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. Rodney hit the ground hard and

ended up breaking part of his tooth. I rushed in from the other side of the court, picked up the broken tooth and gave it to our head trainer. During my freshman year, Rodney was the one who introduced me to people and got me acclimated to the college life. It was my sophomore year, though, that our friendship took a major step. At the start of my sophomore year, I moved into a house with a group of people from Beloit, Kan., that I had met on my floor at Haymaker Hall. However, about two months into the living arrangement, my relationship with the group turned extremely sour, and the environment in the house was extremely unstable. As I talked to Rodney about the situation that involved late night yelling sessions and furniture being tossed around the house, he and his roommate at the time, fellow senior and another close friend of mine Jordan Henriquez, devised a plan for Jordan to move out of the apartment he shared with Rodney to allow me to move in. In a matter of about a week, I was able to move out of the house and into a two-bedroom apartment with Rodney. After two months of hell, I felt at peace and was living with one of my best friends from back home. He and I have been roommates in the same apartment ever since. That second year, his junior year, he took the reins of the team. His coming-out party that year was in Hawaii at the Diamond Head Classic, where, in the championship game, he scored a then-career high 28 points and won the tournament MVP award along with the championship trophy. The night before the game, I went to Rodney's room in



## By the numbers

John Zetmeir  
staff writer

**0** The number conference wins on the road that TCU has this season

In their first season in the Big 12 Conference, the Horned Frogs have struggled to have any kind of success. They only have one win in conference play which came at home in the biggest upset of the season against KU, the game which allowed K-State to be tied with KU for the number one spot in the Big 12. Besides that game, TCU has rarely competed, especially not on the road, where they have lost by an average of 20.3 points per game.

**2** The number of wins that stand between K-State and their first Big 12 title

If both the K-State Wildcats and the Kansas Jayhawks win out, they will share the regular season Big 12 title. The Wildcats have never won a Big 12 championship, and their last conference title came in

1977, when the conference was known as the Big 8.

**14** The number of home victories for the Wildcats this season

To be able to contend for a Big 12 title, you have to defend your home turf, and that is exactly what the Wildcats have done. The only loss in Bramlage was a 4-point defeat by the Kansas Jayhawks. The Wildcats have been dominant in conference play, winning their seven home games by an average of 14.3 points.

**17.53** The average number of points TCU loses by in conference play

If their record does not indicate it enough, the Horned Frogs have not been competitive in their 16 conference games this season. TCU has only lost three conference games by single digits and all three of those defeats came by 9 points.

**59.7** The number of points the Wildcats give up a game

For the past few seasons, K-State's calling card has been its ability to lock opposing offenses down. This season is no different, as they are once again at the top of the Big 12, giving up the fewest number of points per game in the conference. For a TCU offense that only averages 54 points, scoring may be very difficult for the Horned Frogs tonight.

**98** The number of wins of the three seniors Rodney McGruder, Jordan Henriquez and Martavious Irving

This year's senior class is the winningest in school history. The trio of McGruder, Henriquez and Irving broke the record of 96 wins of last year's senior class of Jamar Samuels and Victor Ojel- eye, and have a chance to help the program win that elusive Big 12 title.



Emily DeShazer | Collegian

The basketball team forms a huddle before the Jan. 22 KU game in Bramlage Coliseum. The last regular season home game begins at 7 p.m. tonight, as the Wildcats take on the TCU Horned Frogs.

## RODNEY | Plays hard despite injury

Continued from page T1

Waikiki. We stood on a balcony overlooking Diamond Head and Waikiki Beach and talked for a bit about how the season had gone up to that point. He was particularly anxious to not only expose himself to the basketball world as a dominant player, but he desperately wanted to win that game against Long Beach State.

After the Long Beach State game, Rodney injured his foot. During the rest of the season I gained a new level of respect for him, as he played through the injury for nearly half the season and was still able to perform at a high level.

His junior year ended in the third round of the NCAA tournament with a loss to Syracuse. That summer, he and I spent most of our time back in the D.C. area together.

At one point, while he was getting a new tattoo, he rallied the entire tattoo parlor, employees and customers alike, to convince me to get my ears pierced. I succumbed to the peer pressure and ended up going through with it. For the record, I actually think I

made a good decision in the long run.

This season, his last in Manhattan, has been every bit as good as the previous two for me. Our friendship has continued to grow as we both have begun to realize that our future beyond K-State is imminent.

The memory that stands out from this season up to this point is a one-on-one game he and I played at the training facility. In previous matchups between us, I was able to, at times, score on 3-pointers or wide-open layups due primarily to the fact that he didn't take me seriously.

So one day over winter break, I challenged him to another game, and he made the claim that I wouldn't score on him. I said I could, and we walked out onto the court to play a game to 11. In about 90 seconds, Rodney beat me 11-0, going all out on the game. At one point, as he was driving from the wing to the bucket, I pulled on his practice jersey from behind in an attempt to stop him, and he basically dragged me along and still got a layup.

His senior year is certainly

not the end of anything. We still have games to play this year, and our friendship will continue. But what Rodney's presence in my life has meant over the past five years is unparalleled by anybody else. My friendship with Rodney over these past three years of my college career has been instrumental in giving me not only a best friend, but a brother to rely on.

Rodney's parents, who are the sweetest and nicest people you will come across, consider me one of their own. And I consider Rodney part of my family as well.

Seeing him play his last game for the team that I grew up adoring tonight at Senior Night will be one of the most emotional times for all of us.

However, I can't wait to see what is in store for Rodney after this season as he looks to play professionally. I have one more year to finish my journalism degree here at K-State. After that, I'm almost positive our paths will cross once again.

Sean Frye is a junior in mass communications. Please send comments to [sports@kstatecollegian.com](mailto:sports@kstatecollegian.com).



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## TCU approaches end of inaugural Big 12 season with 1-15 conference record



Emily DeShazer | Collegian

Senior forward Jordan Henriquez shoots a basket against KU on Jan. 22 in Bramlage Coliseum. Henriquez has the most blocked shots in K-State history, with 201.

Adam Suderman  
staff writer

No matter how you look at

it, the likelihood of a winning first season for TCU in the Big 12 was always slim.

The Horned Frogs hired

Trent Johnson on April 9, 2012, in hopes that Johnson

could use his "power six" conference experience as a spark

for the jump out of the Mountain West.

Heading into Tuesday night's matchup with the

Wildcats, the team from Fort Worth will hope to cure some of their opening Big 12 season woes that has seen the team



# Matching Up

## K-State vs. TCU



Nicolas Wahl  
staff writer

Backcourt

The Wildcats are loaded in the backcourt. Senior Rodney McGruder leads the way for K-State, pouring in almost 16 points per game in Big 12 play. However, the Wildcat show is run by sophomore point guard Angel Rodriguez who averages 12 points and six assists per game in conference play.

Juniors Shane Southwell and Will Spradling and senior Martavious Irving join McGruder and Rodriguez to compose a K-State guard quintet that has helped the Wildcats to a 2.69 per game turnover advantage, shot 39 percent from 3-point range and has a 1.49 assist to turnover ratio. The Wildcats lead the Big 12 in each of these categories.

The Horned Frogs find them-

selves near the bottom of the Big 12 in each of those categories, and to make matters worse, are dead last in defending the 3-point line. TCU lets Big 12 opponents shoot 38.9 percent from 3-point range.

It will be a tough task for TCU's sophomore guard Kyan Anderson, with 11 points and three assists per game in Big 12 play, to slow down the Wildcat guards.

**ADVANTAGE: K-State**

Frontcourt

Though the Wildcats often play small, going with four guards a substantial amount of the time, the inside presence of senior Jordan Henriquez and sophomore Thomas Gipson has, at times, carried K-State.

After hitting a rough patch to begin Big 12 play, the Wildcats

have settled in and crept back toward the top of the Big 12, grabbing 39 percent of available offensive rebounds in league play.

The tandem is averaging nearly 14 points and nine rebounds a game between them, and Henriquez is second in the Big 12 with 31 blocks in conference play.

The one advantage that TCU may have in this ballgame is in getting to the free-throw line. The Horned Frogs lead the Big 12 with a free-throw rate of 40.9 as they only allow opponents a 31.5 mark in conference play. Still, this frontcourt, led by senior forward Adrick McKinney, with 7.7 points per game and 6.4 rebounds per game, is going to have its hands full inside.

**ADVANTAGE: K-State**

Reserves

The Wildcats have seen a number of players step up off of the bench. Junior Omari Lawrence was huge with 12 first-half points against Texas, as McGruder sat on the bench with two early fouls in the game. Last Monday, sophomore Nino Williams came off the bench to score 11-straight points for the Wildcats in the second half of a physical game against West Virginia.

Depending on the opponent, interchangeable starters Henriquez and Gipson have provided depth. The biggest constant, however, has been the steady hand of Irving backing up the K-State backcourt. Irving leads the Wildcats, shooting over 48 percent from 3-point range and has been a capable on-ball defender throughout the season.

TCU goes deep into their bench as well. Ten players are averaging more than 10 minutes per ballgame, but, as with most other aspects of this matchup, the Horned Frogs just don't possess the same firepower that the Wildcats bring to the table.

**ADVANTAGE: K-State**

Coaching

TCU head coach Trent Johnson turned around both Nevada and Stanford before floundering toward the end of his last stop, LSU, prior to taking the reins of the TCU program heading into this season. Despite a current talent deficit relative to other schools in the Big 12, Johnson, especially with the abundant recruiting available in the Dallas-Fort Worth metro area, is primed to turn the Frogs around. That is the future

drop to a 1-15 conference record thus far.

TCU has been beaten by double digits in 12 of its conference losses and seven of them have come by more than a 15-point margin.

As tonight's Senior Night for K-State, the overall environment and mood of Bramlage Coliseum won't do the Horned Frogs any favors.

Finding offensive consistency has been a struggle for TCU, as the teams top scoring performance in conference play totaled only 63 points.

Despite these offensive woes, TCU holds one of the conference's top scoring defenses, ranking fourth in the conference and holding opponents to an average of 61.6 points per game.

Leading the way for TCU has been guard Kyan Anderson with an average of 11.6 points per game.

The sophomore out of Fort Worth has provided the Horned Frogs with one of their strongest perimeter threats and has also averaged 11 points over their last five games, including a team-high of 18 points in Saturday's loss at Texas Tech.

Anderson's point total against the Red Raiders was his seventh consecutive game to score in the double digits.

In the paint, sophomore forward Devonta Abron anchors the frontcourt unit and will be looked upon to provide a push against the much stronger frontcourt of the Wildcats.

Competing against the likes of senior Jordan Henriquez and sophomore Thomas Gipson in the paint won't be an easy task for the Horned Frogs as they'll be facing one of the conference's and country's best rebounding units.

Finding a positive twist to a season in which a team will likely lose 20-plus games isn't exactly an easy task.

Patience has been hard to come by for the TCU faithful, as one of the more painful seasons in the school's recent memory will soon come to an end.

Although it has provided TCU with a number of gloomy moments, the future can only get better for the Horned Frogs as they sit in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, one of the nation's recruiting hotbeds.

One positive however, is that Johnson has shown that he is going to be able to recruit talented players right away. With Karviar Shepherd (No. 3 center, No. 46 overall player) and Brandon Parrish (No. 25 small forward, No. 143 overall player), the Horned Frogs are making strides quickly, and will not be at the bottom of the Big 12 standings in the near future.

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